2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5



It is difficult without further data to compare the energy expended by these natives with the work done by different classes in this country. These Bemba are great walkers and can cover distances which surprise the white man new to the country. They are also trained from the earliest youth to carry heavy loads. Men employed as carriers will walk an average of 15 to 20 miles with 50 lb. loads on their heads daily for a fortnight or so, and women commonly go two- or three-day journeys with a 50 lb. load and a two-year-old baby in addition on their backs. On the other hand, the people do not often do more than a five-hour day in their gardens, the heaviest work being reckoned as hoeing and felling trees (cf. Chap. XVIII). The women probably expend more energy, since they thresh and grind corn on their return from their gardens. The Bemba will dance for an hour or two, but do not seem to be able to keep going for a whole afternoon and evening with the energy of the swamp-dwelling Bisa who live on fish. They seemed to me to work in sudden spurts and then to collapse into complete inactivity, were prostrated by the cold of a June or July dawn, and allowed the least interruption to put them off their work (cf. the calendars given in Chap. X; but in all these cases it is difficult to distinguish physiological from psychological factors (cf. Chap. XIX 'The Will to Work'.

After this preliminary descriptive account of the Bemba environment and foodstuffs, we must turn to the more directly anthropological aspect and consider the eating customs, prejudices, and ideas of these people, as these determine their use of different foods.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5



343 356 the *ubutala* to ward off ants, but more often than not the life of a granary is only two to three years. Nor can rats be kept outside for long.

251 [417] *Filling the granary.* All food is dried in the sun before storing. Drying-racks (*icintambi*, plur. *ifintambi*) are built outside each village. These are rough platforms about 6 feet by 2 feet across, raised on uprights 8 feet high, and reached by a notched climbing-pole. On it are piled heads of millet, sorghum, or other crops to be dried before storing. The millet harvest is sometimes put temporarily in a rough field granary (*nkoloso*), usually made of plaited reeds, before it is carried into the village. As the gardens are often eight or more miles from the village, the convenience of this arrangement is obvious. Later the millet is carried into the village by the women [415] in the big round baskets (*umuseke*, plur. *imiseke*) which contain 40 to 50 lb. The roof of the granary is lifted off and each basket is emptied in one at a time, with the appropriate magic of food-preservation (cf. pp. 206–8). When the whole supply of grain has been emptied into the bin, it must be trodden down hard (*ukushindaila*), a process which the natives consider very important for the preservation of their crop. Next, the roof must be raised into position, and the entrance barred with transverse logs.

[417] To take out the grain, the owner leans a primitive ladder of notched logs (*umutanto*, plur. *imitanto*) against the granary, clambers up, removes the barricade across the entrance, squeezes through the narrow aperture, sometimes raising the roof as she does so, and swings herself down into the dark interior of the bin by the platform bars.

[415] Precious seeds or dried legumes are often kept in a clay water-pot (*umutondo*) or gourd, the mouth of the vessel being plastered over with a layer of clay (*ukumashila*). This is apparently an efficient method of storage, and protects all crops except Kaffir corn from rats and insect pests. Another method of storing legumes or ● 482 ground-nuts is to make one of the grass carriers known as *umubamba* (plur. *imibamba*). It is common to see natives going about the country carrying round egg-shaped bundles of grass tied with a 415 net-work of bark strands, and containing a hundred pounds or so 251 of seeds. The European is at a loss to understand how a ball about 2 feet in diameter can be made of unplaited grass, and how the beans are inserted in the middle. In fact, the method is ingenious. A round or oblong hole about 18 inches across and a

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

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291
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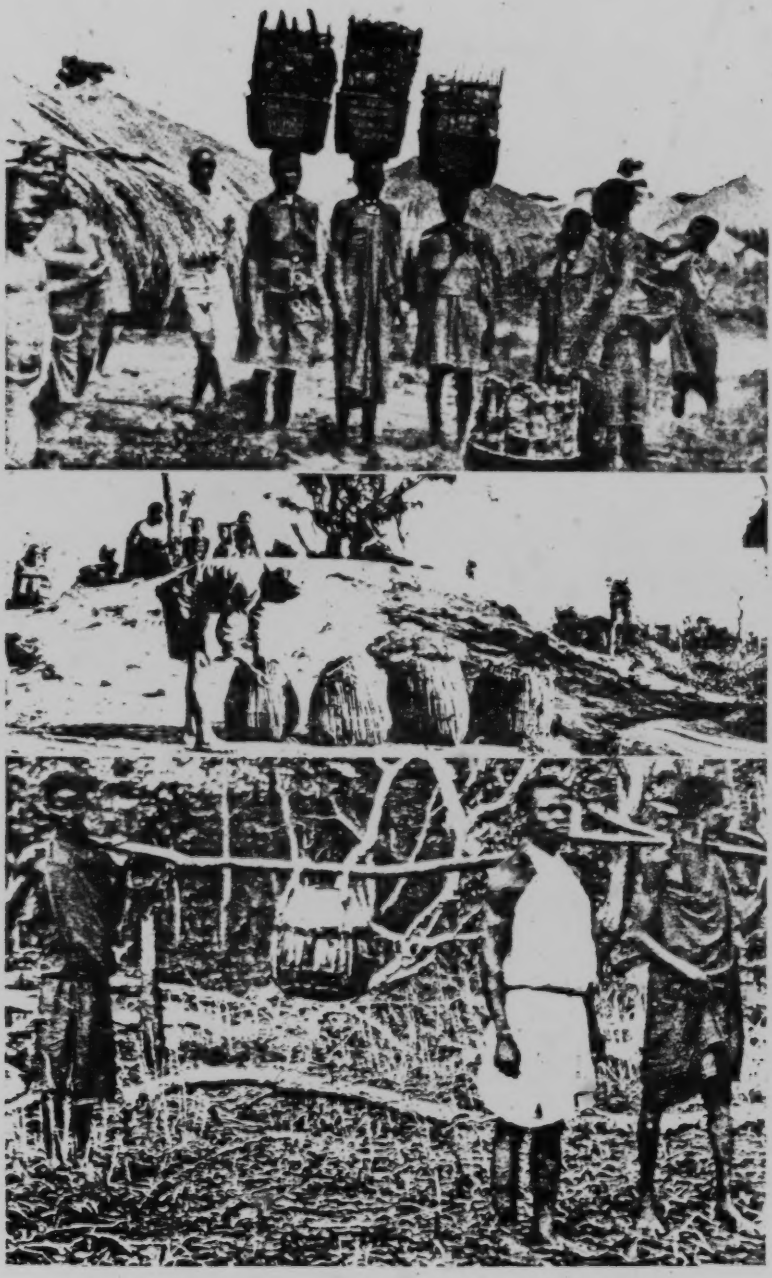

Tribute labour. Carrying in the Paramount Chief's crop of ground-nuts, 1933.

Tribute. Fishing villages send four baskets of fish as their dues to the Paramount Chief, who is sitting with his beer-pot on top of the mound, 1933.

Tribute labour. Carrying blessed seed to sow Chief Nkula's millet garden, 1933.

[facing p. 256]

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5



burning (*ukusankula*). He must lay them on the ground in some semblance of a row with all the stems pointing in one direction (*ukuloshye mikongole mukati*). This will distinguish his branches from those of his neighbours, who make it their business to point their boughs in the other direction. It also eases the work of the women who have later to lift the heavy branches and stack them. A careful man helps his wife in this way—an old man, as an informant usually adds in explanation, taking it for granted that the two terms are synonymous. 'Young men leave the branches as they fall, "*pambilibili*", to use an expressive native term, which we should translate by "all anyhow".'

Next comes the business of stacking the branches. Here the rationale of the *icitemene* system becomes evident. The aim of the native is plainly not to clear the bush of obstructions, but to collect the maximum amount of brushwood to burn. It is the ash which he considers valuable, and the burning of the soil. The woman who piles the branches carries them as high as possible from the ground, so that twigs and leaves should not snap off in transit, and thus waste valuable fuel.

Piling the branches is the hardest work a Bemba woman does, and I have heard the wives of urban natives say that they were afraid to go back to the villages 'where we have to pile branches'. The women lift boughs, often fifteen or twenty feet long, stagger as they balance the length on their heads, adjust themselves to the weight, and start off with the load. All morning they come and go in this way. There is a good deal of skill required in the stacking of branches. They must be laid with their stems to the centre, so that they radiate out in a roughly circular or oval pile. The branches must be piled evenly one on top of the other until they reach a height of about two feet. If any portion of the garden is only lightly covered with boughs, the soil beneath it will be only partly burnt. Natives point to barren patches in a millet field and say the branches were not properly piled on that spot. As the end of the work approaches the woman makes a circular edge to the stack (*umukubililo*) by arranging small branches round in a ring. This is to prevent the fire from spreading too far into the bush, and to provide an extra thick pile of ashes for planting cucumbers and gourds round the edge of the garden.

The work of *ukutema* begins with the cold weather in April or May, and it may last right through till August or September.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5



881 roughly tied, and they were made to crawl a few yards in this position. Then the branches were pulled off again and piled into a heap about two feet high. The girls were told to jump over it. Both scuttled across the open space like frightened rabbits to the accompaniment of screams of encouragement and threats from all around. ('Don't tremble!' 'Don't be frightened, you silly girls.' 'Jump now! Jump high.') The girls were evidently nervous to a degree, and one failed to manage the moderate jump expected and had to try again and again. When both the girls were over, [302] there was an outburst of congratulation. Nangoshye rubbed red cam wood (*nkula*) on the faces and shoulders of all the older women present and on me as the giver of the chisungu. This red powder used to be rubbed on returning warriors and men who had passed successfully through the poison ordeal; and it is still daubed on lion-killers.

[482 576] Nangoshye picked up her paternal niece and carried her across her back, and the other girl was shouldered by her own father's sister. The two old women led the procession back to the village carrying the girls shoulder high as chiefs or brides are carried as a sign of honour.

> '*We have dragged a heavy stone down from the hills*
> *We have brought it in.*'
> '*The skin of the leopard which makes you cry,*
> *We have dragged it and dragged it;*
> *We have brought it in.*' (No. 3.)

('The chisungu has fallen off.' 'Yes like a stone.' 'The red powder is the blood.')[1]

Arriving at the village, we crowded into the chisungu hut again. The girl helpers picked up the big drums and the characteristic chisungu rhythm rang out. As the initiation candidates were hustled into the hut, the women broke into another song calling on the people to look at what had been brought in. (No. 4) 'I have

[1] *Subsequent Bemba interpretation.* The heavy stone is the weight of the chisungu. (A.C.). It means the difficulty and hardship she will have to go through before reaching maturity. They have passed through danger. Therefore they are marked with red powder like the lion-killers. The leopard skin makes the girls cry. (The leopard skin was worn by *banacimbusa* in old days and therefore represents authority.) The leopard signifies the hardship the girls will have to face.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5



with shrieks of delighted laughter, 'Here come the bridegrooms.' The two women imitated the swaggering gait of young gallants, and pretended to speak in bass voices. They carried male symbols —the bow and arrow, the red cam wood powder of the successful warrior and lion-killer, and the salt, which the husband had to fetch for the household in the old days. The twigs round their heads were said to represent the circlets worn formerly by magicians, and the leaf cups might well have been fertility symbols, though I did not ask.

We formed into a triumphant procession as we neared the village. Everyone carried branches or imitation bundles of firewood on their backs. Even the children who ran in front, shouting, had tiny faggots strapped on their backs. The mock bridegrooms followed and behind them came the *banacisungu* with the emblem bundles strapped on to their shoulders.

As we got near the first houses, the two girls were made to crawl single file with some of their companions, and then they were hidden by a couple of mats carried like a screen round them. The women waved their branches to and fro and began to surge first forward and then backward—four steps forward very slowly behind the crawling girls, and then four steps backward. They sang again and again (No. 15).

*'Mark one step after the other*
*Let us not turn back.'*

('The crawling backwards is to teach the girls obedience.')[1]

*The mother-daughter rite*

The procession wound interminably on, forward and back, forward and back, until we reached the house of one of the girl's mothers. Here the *banacisungu* were told to lie down and to put their heads first on a bunch of sorghum and then on some clusters of finger millet. These are the two most important cereal foods of the tribe. The seeds had been thrown there by the girl's mother.

(The mother says, 'I shall get every kind of seed and give it to my child.' This sentence was repeated by several women with great

[1] *Subsequent interpretation*. A *nacimbusa*: 'It is to teach the girls they have to go back if they have made a mistake. A.C. 'What you have gone through is over. You have entered a new world, but you mustn't forget and fall back.'

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

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536

The mime of the wild pig scratching up the grass round a tree (Song No. 7) (See p. 69)

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The sisters of the girls' bridegrooms act as men, carrying bows and arrows and a mock lump of salt (See p. 73)

[facing p. 80]